

DANIEL F. WATERS GERMANTOWN DYE WORKS,
BUILDING A
37-55 East Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-213-A

HAER
PA
SI-PHILA,
716A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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51-PHILA,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

DANIEL F. WATERS GERMANTOWN DYE WORKS, BUILDING A

HAER No. PA-213-A

Location:

37-55 E. Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation
48 East Penn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Present Occupant:

Vacant.

Significance:

This structure was originally constructed as the dwelling of William Mills, the founder of the Germantown Dye Works.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date(s) of Erection:

William Mills' dwelling was built in 1862 (Hexamer 1866), the same year he established the Germantown Dye works.

Architect:

Unknown.

Original/Subsequent Owners:

See Chain of Title.

Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Unknown.

Original Plans/Construction:

Building A, as evidenced on the 1878 Hexamer Survey, was originally a 2-1/2-story stone dwelling, with a wood shingle roof. The structure measured 30' by 22', and had a rear 2-story stone section with adjoining frame sheds.

Alterations/Additions:

In the early twentieth century, the exterior of Building A was extensively altered. A full third floor was added and the front facade was treated with a mansard roof with a prominent gambrel cross gable. A 2-story brick addition with single slope roof was added to the rear of the building.

B. Historical Context

Building A is one of the earliest structures at the Germantown Dye Works. William Mills lived there, adjacent to his dye works operation. As the operation grew, Mills in 1875 constructed an office building (Building B) immediately east to his house. The two buildings (Buildings A and B) shared a common party wall. Building A ceased to be a residence when the dye works changed ownership between the Millses and Daniel F. Waters in the 1890s. At that time, Building A was altered, converted into office space, and internally linked with the office building.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Architectural Character:

The building reflects through its residential scaled massing, fenestration and details its original use as William Mills' dwelling.

Condition of Fabric:

The structure is in generally poor condition with some mortar erosion, falling stucco, and a collapsing exterior bay.

B. Description of Exterior

Overall Dimensions:

Front section: 22' x 30', 3-bay, 3-story.
Middle Section: 16' x 38', 2-story.
Rear section: 16' x 10', 1-story.

Foundations:

Stone.

Walls:

Pebble dash stucco-over-stone (schist) on the front two buildings and brick on the rear.

Structural System/Framing:

Masonry bearing walls with internal wood framing.

Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:

None. Originally, a simple marble block stoop existed prior to Building A's renovation.

Chimneys:

None. The flue venting the furnace is located in Building B.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Front (Wister Street) elevation doorway has been infilled. Rear doorway has a simple wood surround. The rear door is of wood with two panels, and is currently boarded over.

Windows/Shutters:

Window openings on the first and third floors are boarded over and the sash has been removed. The ground floor front elevation was altered from residential to single horizontal window opening. The three bays of the second floor facing Wister Street and those of the southern elevation are two-over-two double-hung wooden sash. The front three windows have limestone lintels. The basement has two windows on the front elevation.

Roof:

Mansard roof with slate shingles; front building. Beyond the mansard, the roof slopes to the rear of the building. A gambrel cross gable projects from the mansard roof. A metal cornice separates the mansard roof with a projecting gable from first two storys. The simple bracketed cornice has terminating pressed metal finials at each end.

C. Description of Interior

Floor Plans:

First floor is two large rooms with stairwell, second floor same as first, and third floor is one room.

Stairways:

Interior wooden stairway extends from rear addition south to third floor, with a landing on the second floor.

Flooring:

Linoleum over pine board sub-floor.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Rooms paneled up to five feet with c.1950 pressed vertical board. Area above paneling and ceiling is plastered.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Mid-twentieth century replacement doors throughout.

Windows:

Simple c.1900 molded wood surrounds with plain board reveals.

Decorative Features and Trim:

Not available.

Hardware:

Mid-twentieth century locks, hinges, and knobs.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

Forced air with floor registers.

Lighting:

Modern electrical fixtures.

Plumbing:

Not applicable.

D. Site

General Setting/Orientation:

Building A sits on the southeastern corner of the dye works site, facing Wister Street. It shares a party wall with Building B, to the immediate west.

Historic Landscape Design:

The 1875 Hexamer Survey notes a garden at the rear of Mills' house, with a vertical board fence separating Mills' property from neighbors to the east.

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Outbuildings:

None